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THE TEST OF TRUTH, PIETY, AND ALLEGIANCE:

A S E R M O N,

DELIVERED ON THE DAY OF SACRAMENTAL QUALIFICATION FOR
THE CHIEF MAGISTRACY OF THE CITY OF LONDON;

BEFORE THE

Right Hon. the Lord Mayor, the Aldermen, and Sheriffs.

BY C. E. DE COETLOGON, A. M.
CHAPLAIN TO THE MAYORALTY.

*A firm Attachment to Principles of your own is perfectly consistent with an extensive
Charity to Those, who discover an Attachment as firm to Principles diametrically opposite.*

ROBINSON'S PLEA, &c.

We wish to cherish the amiable Spirit of TOLERATION, but to preclude an ABUSE
of it. D^o.

Let us support LIBERTY, but let the GROUNDS of the CONSTITUTION be
SACRED. MR. PITT.

L O N D O N :

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M DCC XC.

PICKETT, MAYOR.

A COMMON COUNCIL holden in the Chamber of the
Guildhall of the City of *London*, on *Thursday* the
11th Day of *February*, 1790.

RESOLVED, That the Reverend Mr. *De Coetlogon*,
Chaplain to the Right Honorable the LORD MAYOR, be re-
quested to print the Sermons preached by him, before his
LORDSHIP and the ALDERMEN, at the Parish-Church of
St. Lawrence Jewry, on *Sunday* the Tenth Day of *January*
last, and at the Cathedral-Church of *St. Paul* on the First
Sunday in *Hilary* Term; and to cause a Copy thereof to be
sent to every Member of this COURT.

R I X.

THE TEST OF TRUTH,

&c. &c.

ISAIAH VIII. 20.

TO THE LAW, AND TO THE TESTIMONY: IF THEY SPEAK NOT
ACCORDING TO THIS WORD, IT IS BECAUSE THERE IS NO
LIGHT IN THEM.

AMONG the *occasional* Disadvantages, which have been
known to attend the Operations of human Reason, hu-
man Learning, and human Philosophy, we may certainly reckon,
That of their Propensity to gratify an impertinent and irreligious
Curiosity, respecting the Proceedings and Conduct of the Most
High. And this, from a very unjustifiable *Inattention*, to their
extreme Inferiority in the great Scale of Intelligence---to that
conscious Weakness of the human Mind, the very ingenuous

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Acknowledgment of which has immortalized the Memory, and the Fame, of Socrates, in the Annals of philosophical History--- and, to that sublime Appeal of Zophar, the Naamathite, to Job, when he said, “ Can’st *Thou* by searching, find out God? Can’st *Thou* find out the Almighty to Perfection? It is as high, as Heaven---what can’st *Thou* do? Deeper than Hell---what can’st *Thou* know? The measure thereof is longer than the Earth, and broader than the Sea!”

With respect to the Designs of God, towards his rational and intelligent Creatures, from the beginning of Time to the final Consummation of all Things, what a Multitude of Questions might be proposed by Curiosity and Conceit, which, neither the Wisdom of the wise, nor the Virtue of the good, would be able to answer, in any other Style than that of the inspired Prophet in the Text. For the *Little*, which is to be known, of the *Nature*, the *Will*, the *Worship*, and the *Ways* of God, in Opposition to the Ignorance, the Infidelity, the Scepticism, the Superstition, and the Idolatry, in which the unenlightened are enveloped, “ To the *Law*, and to the *Testimony*: for, if they speak not according to *this Word*, it is because there is no *Light* in them.”

It may be proper to consider the Article, in each of these Clauses, as super-eminently emphatic---*the Law*; to which

all

all other Laws are secondary and inferior---*the* Testimony ; beside which, all other Testimonies are fallible and uncertain---*the* Light ; in Comparison of which all other intellectual Luminaries shine but with a glow-worm Ray---*this* Word ; the Word of *Life* ; the Word of *Reconciliation* ; the Word of *Salvation* ; THE WORD OF GOD. If it be our Object, to understand what is Superstition ;---what is Enthusiasm ;---what is Religion ;---what is Truth ;---what is Virtue ;---what is Good ;---to the Law, and to the Testimony : if we think not, and speak not, and judge not, according to this Word, we have no Light in us, upon either of these important Particulars.

TO THE LAW.

A Term this, which we shall find in frequent Use throughout the sacred Writings, and in various Application ; sometimes in a very limited, and sometimes in a more extensive point of view. In the former, when we are told, that, “ The *Law* was given by Moses, but Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ ;” and that “ the *Law* was our School-master, to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by Faith :” in the latter, when it is said, “ Blessed is the Man, who walketh not in the Counsel of

the ungodly, but his Delight is in the *Law* of the Lord, and in his Law doth he meditate day and night ;” and again, “The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the Soul---the Testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple---the Statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the Heart ; more to be desired are they than Gold, yea, than much fine Gold---sweeter also than Honey or the Honey-comb.”

In an Interpretation the most unlimited, we can conceive, is *The Law* to be understood in the passage immediately under our discussion ; as including in it the *whole* Scriptures, which have been given us by the inspiration of God, at fundry *times*, and in divers *manners*, through the Instrumentality of Moses and the Prophets, the Evangelists and the Apostles.

When the Bible is considered under this particular Denomination, it is to be received, and regarded, as a Digest of that System of Legislation, whose Origin is *divine* ; the grand Outline of which was delivered to Moses from mount Sinai---was illuminated in successive Periods by the Spirit of Prophecy---and obtained it's consummate Perfection in the evangelical or christian Dispensation.

A *Law*, it is very well known, is an Act of *Power*, and of *Sovereignty* ; by which a Superior declares his Will to those, who are his rightful Subjects. And there are *two* Branches of this

this supreme Power ; *Legislation*, and *Jurisdiction*---the giving of the Law, and the governing according to that Law.

In the present Case, the Lawgiver is no less a Being than the moral Governor of the World---the incomprehensibly great and glorious Majesty of Heaven ; whose *Authority* is indisputable, and underived---whose *Power* is omnipotent---whose *Wisdom* is infinite---and whose *Dignity* is so absolutely beyond all Description and Utterance, that, “ It is HE, who sitteth upon the Circle of the Earth, and the Inhabitants thereof are as Grass-hoppers ; who stretcheth out the Heavens, as a Curtain, and spreadeth them out as a Tent to dwell in ; who bringeth the *Princes* to nothing ; he maketh the *Judges* of the Earth, as Vanity. All nations, before HIM, are as *nothing*, and they are, counted to HIM, *less* than nothing, and vanity.”

THIS is the Lawgiver. And, as every *Law* has, in its very nature, a *commanding* Influence, when the sacred Oracles are represented to us under that Idea, they are to be attended to, as so many express Injunctions of the divine Legislator, respecting what we are to *think*---what we are to *believe*---what we are to *chuse*---what we are to *love*---and what we are to *do* ; respecting the particular Use, we are to make, of all the different *Faculties* and *Powers*, the *Privileges* and *Talents*, of which, as moral and intelligent Beings, we shall be called upon

upon to render a very minute Account at the Judgment-Seat of CHRIST.

The BIBLE, therefore, is not only a *Rule*, for Information, but a *Law* for Obligation---it is not only a Counsel, but a *Precept*---not only an Exhortation, but a *Charge*---not only an Advice, but a *Decree*; a Decree too, from which there lies no Appeal---which is never to be reversed---for the WORD of our God must stand for ever; and heaven and earth shall pass away, ere one Jot or Tittle of *the Law* shall fail. And the Voice of that God, in the Oeconomy of his Providence, is continually addressing itself to You, to Me, to All, into whose Hands this Law is placed, and saying, as it once said to Joshua, “ This Book of the *Law* shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt *meditate* therein day and night, that thou mayest *observe* to *do* according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good Success.”

To be inattentive to the gentle Whispers of THIS WORD, to it's benign and salutary Insinuations, is the Shame of our *Reason*---the Disgrace of our *Nature*---the most unmanly Symptom of our *Folly*---and may, peradventure, have it's final Issue

Issue in the everlasting Ruin of our *Happiness* and *Peace*.
Therefore, to The Law.

AND, TO THE TESTIMONY.

A *Testimony* is an Evidence or Proof, by Witness; and it has respect to some Person, or to some Thing, or to both Person and Thing. According to this Idea or Definition of the Term, we are to remark, in the instance before us, that, the Testimony is super-natural---for it is from God; and that Testimony is, the Law, or, the Bible. The Divinity of which, it is not in our Design, at present, to illustrate, or to confirm; but, in the admission of it's celestial Origin, to shew what is the Import of this it's particular Denomination.

It is a Testimony from heaven, concerning the Person, the Offices, and the Character of the Mediator and Redeemer. *The Spirit of Prophecy*, it is most clearly asserted; was given for the *Testimony* of JESUS. And, as to *the Gospel*, we have apostolical Example and Authority for calling it, *The Testimony of our Lord*.

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It is a Testimony from the high and holy One, who inhabiteth Eternity, concerning the *precise* and the *only Way of Acceptance* and *Salvation* for repentant Criminals ; concerning the Nature of *true Worship*, of *genuine Piety*, and of *Christian Virtue*. And the Necessity of such a divine Interposition, for the purpose of instructing Mankind in these essential Points, has been so fully demonstrated from the history of all Antiquity, that Nothing but the most inexcusable Infidelity, or the most shameless Irreligion, will now be hardy enough to dispute it.

Whenever, therefore, these inspired Writings are recommended to our Notice and Estimation, they are to be considered, as the Deposition, or Testimony of the only wise GOD---who can neither deceive, nor be deceived---to *satisfy* the Minds of Men, in relation to the first, the highest, the noblest of all Concerns, the Things of *God* and *Religion*, their *Souls*, and *Eternity*. And, it is very certain, we can have no Satisfaction from any other Quarter. And, since we have sufficient Proof, from the Principles of moral Certainty, that they are indeed the true Sayings of God, “ He that hath received this *Testimony* hath set to his Seal, that God is *true*.---If we receive the Testimony of Men, the Testimony of God is greater: for this is *The Testimony of God*, which he hath testified of his Son. He, that believeth on the Son of God, hath the Testimony in Himself; but, he that believeth not God, hath made him a Liar; because he believeth not the Testimony, which God gave

gave of his SON: and *THIS* is the Testimony, that God hath *given* to us eternal Life; and this Life is in his Son. He that *hath* the Son, hath Life; and he that *hath not* the Son of God, hath not Life."

A very considerable Philosopher of our own Age, and a strenuous Advocate for the Law, and the Testimony, has observed with the most critical Propriety, that, "There is one sort of Propositions, which challenges the *highest Degree* of our Assent, upon bare Testimony, whether the Thing proposed agree or disagree with common Experience, and the ordinary Course of Things, or no. The Reason whereof is, because it is the Testimony of GOD himself. This carries with it, Certainty beyond Doubt, Evidence beyond Exception. This is called by a peculiar Name, REVELATION; and our Assent to it, FAITH: which has as much Certainty, as our Knowledge itself; and we may as well doubt of our own Being, as we can, whether any Revelation from God be *true*." *---

To the Law then, and to the Testimony. For,

* *Locke on Hum. Und. B. iv. Chap. 16.*

IF THEY SPEAK NOT ACCORDING TO THIS WORD, IT IS BECAUSE THERE IS NO LIGHT IN THEM.---

Among the various Lights, by which the intelligent Creation of God profess to have been led in the several Periods of the World, we sometimes hear and read of the Light of Nature---the Light of Reason---the Light of Learning and Philosophy---a Light within---and, the Light of supernatural Revelation.

Every thing of this sort is of too much Consequence, of too serious a Nature, to be treated with Ridicule, with Satire, or with Contempt. It should be the benevolent Ambition of our Hearts to instruct the Ignorance of Mankind; to inform their Understandings; to correct their Mistakes; to allure them from the Paths of Error; from the Labyrinths of Perplexity, and the Horrors of intellectual Darknefs; and to direct their Attention to the only Light of Infallibility and Truth---the Word of God.

That we are indebted to the *Light of Nature* for some glimmerings of Intelligence, respecting the great Object of all Religion,

gion, it would be absurd and extravagant to dispute. From the natural History of the World---from it's external Order, it's Beauty, it's Variety, we may discover the Certainty of the Existence, and something of the transcendent Perfections, of the Godhead.

They tell us, in a kind of hieroglyphic Character, that there is *A Being*, who is incomprehensible in his Essence; infinite in his Glories; and independent in his Operations. In this respect, notwithstanding their comparative Darkeness, the very *Heathens* themselves were left without Excuse---“ because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God; for that which may be known of God, was *manifest* to them; for the invisible things of God from the Creation of the World are clearly seen---being understood by the things which are made---even his eternal Power, and Godhead:” or as the very same Truth is otherwise expressed, “ The Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament sheweth his handy Work. Day unto day uttereth Speech, and Night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no Speech, nor Language where their Voice is not heard. Their Line is gone out through all the earth, and their Words to the end of the World.”

Such is the Light of Nature, in the visible Creation of God: and such are our Obligations to that universal Preacher.---To

the Light of Reason, when properly understood and applied, our Obligations are by no means less.---But, where are the Nations, by which it has ever *been* properly understood, and applied? And what is the History of human Reason, unassisted by divine Revelation, but the History of all the Superstitions, the Idolatry, the monstrous Reveries, with which the Pagan Records abound---and which forced, from the pious Indignation of the Apostles, such Strains as these, to the Priests of Jupiter---“Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are Men of like Passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from *these Vanities* unto the Living God.”---And again, in an Address to the Citizens and Literati of Athens, “Ye Men of Athens, I perceive that in all Things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your Devotions [or the Gods that ye worship] I found an Altar with this Inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye *ignorantly* worship, Him declare I unto you. GOD, that made the World, seeing that He is Lord of Heaven and Earth, dwelleth not in Temples made with Hands, neither is worshipped with Men’s hands, as though He needed any Thing---seeing he giveth to all, Life, and Breath, and all Things: For in him, we live, and move, and have our Being; as certain also of your own Poets have said, For we are his Offspring.---Forasmuch then as we are the Offspring of God, we ought not to think that *the Godhead* is like unto Gold, or Silver, or Stone graven by Art and Man’s Device.”

So that, notwithstanding the external Light of Nature, accompanied with the internal Light of Reason, [if I may be permitted so to express myself] The Egyptians, The Grecians, and the Romans, to which no Gentile Empire was ever superior, “became vain in their Imaginations, and their foolish Heart was *darkened*. Professing themselves to be wise, they became Fools; and changed the Glory of the incorruptible God into an Image, made like to corruptible Man, and to Birds, and to Beasts, and to creeping Things.---They changed the Truth of God into a Lie, and worshipped the Creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever.”

This was the melancholy and humiliating Fact, upon the harmonious Attestation of all Antiquity. To be ignorant of it, is not merely to be unlearned, but to be unacquainted with the general Account of the human Race, from the Fall of our original Parents to the present Times. And hence the Expediency, the Utility, the Necessity of THAT LIGHT, which it has been agreed to call THE LIGHT OF DIVINE REVELATION; THE LIGHT of THIS WORD. The Light of *Knowledge*---the Light of *Grace*---the Light of *Faith*---the Light of *Purity*---and the Light of *Peace*.


It is obvious, we are to understand the metaphorical Allusion in this comprehensive view in the Passage before us, as well as in that, where the same Prophet was directed by the Holy Ghost,

Ghost, to address the Jewish Church in the subsequent Style of Sublimity and Animation---“ Arise; shine; for thy Light is come, and the Glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold, the Darkness shall cover the earth, and gross Darkness the People; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his Glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy *Light*, and Kings to the Brightness of thy rising;”---no doubt, with an ultimate Reference to the approaching Advent of *the Messiah*. “ For, in Him was Life, and the Life was *the Light* of Men. And *the Light* shineth in Darkness, but the Darkness comprehendeth it not.”

It may perhaps be said---“ But, what is Light?---There is a Definition as philosophical, as it is apposite to our point, which an inspired Writer has given us, when he says, “ Whatsoever maketh manifest, is Light.” And the Light of *this Word* is the Manifestation of divine *Truth*---of *Life*---of *Immortality*---of *Glory*---and of God. It is a Light, which is calculated to rescue an immortal Mind from Darkness, worse than that which was not only *seen*, but *felt*, in the Dominions of the rebellious Pharaoh, by the judicial Stroke of Heaven. It is a Light, which shines upon the Soul, that, without it, must be left to wander, restless and forlorn, in the dismal Wilds of Obscurity, of Scepticism, of Despair. It is a Light, in competition with the transcending Excellency of which, the glorious

ous Orb of Day itself, in all it's meridian Splendour, is no more than a sickly Taper's gleam.

After all, both Time and Talents must for ever fail me in communicating such Ideas of THIS LIGHT, as are in any Degree adequate to it's inestimable, it's unspeakable Worth. Sorry I am to add, "And this is the Condemnation, that Light is come into the World, and Men loved Darknefs rather than Light, because their Deeds were evil. For every one, that doeth evil, hateth the Light, neither cometh to the Light; but He that doeth Truth, cometh to the Light." And, allow me to assure you, that, in whatever manner we may chuse to treat this sacred Volume of divine Revelation, it is the only unerring Criterion, Standard, or TEST of Truth, of Religion, of Virtue.---Reason may say one thing---Learning may say another---and Philosophy may differ from them both; but, to the LAW, and to the TESTIMONY; if They speak not according to THIS WORD, it is because there is no LIGHT in them. THIS, and this ALONE, is the all-decifive TEST, by which they are to be tried, and adjudged. For This is the only *perfect* Law, the only *infallible* Testimony, and the only *divine* Light.

As a Corollary from the whole then, we may very safely infer,  THE BIBLE is the only decisive, universal, and infallible

Test

Test of all divine *Truth*---of all genuine *Religion*---of all right *Worship*---and of all acceptable *Obedience*.

But, beside Religion and Morals, there is nothing of real Value to the Interests of Society, and the general Good, but what may be said to have it's proper *Test*; or That, by which we are to discriminate between the true and the false, the genuine and the counterfeit. Every royal Signet, and every national Stamp, is to answer an End, the Expediency and Utility of which it would be preposterous to dispute.---And, shall our Allegiance to the Constitution, both in Church and State, upon which the Peace of the former, and the Prosperity of the latter, must in the very Nature of Things depend, be without it's TEST?

As to the *Sacramental Recollection* of the Life, the Sufferings, and the Death of our incarnate GOD and SAVIOUR, in it's *original* Design, and according to it's *primitive* Institution, it may be considered, I apprehend, as a pious and public Avowal of our Attachment to the *Person*---the *Work*---the *Offices*---the *Truth*---and the *Government* of the Redeemer; that we *adore* his *Person*---*depend* upon his *Work*---*venerate* and *esteem* his mediatorial Character---*apply* to him in his respective *Offices*---*cordially believe* his *Truth*---and unfeignedly *submit* to his Government, as the King of Kings, and as the Lord of Lords.

In a *secondary* and *inferior* Point of View, it has been instituted, after the most mature Consideration, and under particular Circumstances, as a solemn Testimonial in the Sight of GOD, and MEN, of our conscientious Attachment to the civil and ecclesiastical Constitution of that State, whose *Privileges* we enjoy---whose Honours we receive---and whose Rights, we are, upon that very Account, more especially obligated to maintain and defend. It may therefore be denominated, *A sacramental Oath*. Every Species of Opposition to *this Test*, is, in fact, an Opposition to the very Frame of the Government, to which we belong. And, under whatever plausible Appearances that Opposition may be insinuated, should it ever be crowned with the Success, at which it ultimately aims, it's *final Issue* must be the Ruin of the Constitution itself. An *Aim*---by no Means consistent with that Moderation, that Integrity, that universal Benevolence, or that public Spirit, which we should be most willing to admire in those, who from a Want of Comprehension,---or from unavoidable Prepossession---or from a mistaken Zeal, are disposed to indulge it.

As Religion ever has been, and ever must be, the principal Cement, the grand Support of civil Society---and has so been considered by every wise, and virtuous Legislator---the best Security for *national* Religion is, a *national Establishment*. Not that we would be understood to contend for *any*, and *every* Establishment, any more than for *any* and *every* Religion:

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But, admitting the Establishment, for which we plead, to be *legitimate*,---by which we mean, in Harmony with the *fundamental Truths* of Christianity, and with the *Spirit* and *Genius* of our most holy Faith---the very same Reasons may be advanced in the Defence of it's *Security*, as for the Security of the civil Constitution itself: and a *sacramental Oath*, by Way of *Test*, is full as justifiable, it should seem, in Relation to the former, as a *civil Oath*, in Relation to the latter.


A Test of *this peculiar Nature*, appointed and continued for *the Security of the National Religion, the ecclesiastical Establishment, and the Peace of the State*, has been disrelished by certain Members of the Community, as *an Act of Persecution, Injustice, and Profanation*; as injurious, to the Rights of Nature---to Liberty of Conscience---and to one of the most solemn Ordinances of Christianity.

To maintain, that particular Individuals may not be exposed to some Inconveniencies by such a Test, is a Position, which we by no Means affect. It is admitted. Nor perhaps is it to be avoided. At any Rate, it is an Act of the Legislature---of which our Disapprobation, if we venture it, should be extremely cautious and modest; more especially, when the general Peace may be the too likely Sacrifice, and when the Institution itself may be politically wise, if not absolutely requisite. And indeed, what an Infant must he be, in this Branch
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of human Science, who knows not, that, in the present State of Things, nothing can be planned *mathematically* exact! As to Perfection, it is an Impossibility; and, however we may lament the corrupt Necessity, a *public Good* may in too many Instances operate as a private Evil. Of this, however, *A Patriot*, we all acknowledge, will be the last to complain.

That Men, who are born equally free, and, who *equally* contribute to the Support of *Government*, and *the Peace* of Society, should equally enjoy all the Privileges of that Society, and the Favour and Support of that Government, is a Maxim, which it would be disingenuous and weak to controvert. And is not the Reverse of this Maxim as true, that, those who do *not equally* contribute to the Support of Government and to the Peace of Society should *not equally* enjoy *all* the Privileges of that Society? Not, so far, at least, as to be admitted to that *Influence* or that *Power*, which, in all Probability, must *terminate* in the melancholy Revolution of that Government and Society itself.

With respect to *Persecution*, of which, from the mere Association of Ideas, the very Sound is rendered horrible to Benevolence, to Religion, and to Learning---may it be banished to the Regions of Satan, from whence, no Doubt, it made it's original Escape! May the unrighteous Wounds, which the Cause of God, and Truth has heretofore received, never bleed

afresh ! Nor never let it be supposed, that, the Voice, the celestial Voice, which, in it's Descent from Heaven, proclaimed " Glad Tidings of great Joy to all People," could ever be induced to give it's sacred Sanction to so detestable, so merciless a Fiend ! The Emblem of our Religion is, neither the Faggot, nor the Sword,---but, the Olive Branch and the Dove.--- And, it is with Rapture we can testify, that, *the Act of Toleration* has, we hope, once for all, and once for ever, exiled that hideous Monster from the political System of the British Empire.---To throw out an Intimation to the contrary, is as ungrateful, as it is false, and unjust---especially at a Period, in which we have so much Reason to deplore, that, the most unbridled *Licentiousness* has usurped the Name of *Liberty*, and is bidding the most shameless Defiance both to *Discipline* and *Truth*. Call it *Bigotry*---call it *Prejudice*---call it *Ignorance*, or whatever else you please, we are not timid to affirm, that,  It is the Excellency of RELIGION, to be the Source and Soul of public Felicity ; and it is the highest Honour of the STATE, to be it's Security and Protection for that inestimable End. And, as soon as ever the *Toleration* shall be permitted to intrude upon the *Establishment*, or the *Establishment* upon the *Toleration*, either the *One*, or the *other*, or in the general Confusion, perhaps *Both*, will have an *End*.

As to the Objection to this Part of our Legislature, which has been urged with such apparent Plausibility, and such inordinate

dinate Triumph, “ from the vile *Abuse* and scandalous *Profanation* of the most solemn Institution of our Religion”---we may offer, in Reply to that, an Argument, which will stand the severest Scrutiny of the most logical Inquisitor ; which is, that, to argue against the *Utility* or *Excellency* of a Thing from the *Abuse* or *Perversion* of it, is no Proof of our Observation, our Understanding, our Candour, or our Propriety. It is an Argument, which proves *too much*, and therefore Nothing.

Under the Sanction however of that *Freedom*, which is assumed by others, and which, while it is unprostituted to ignominious or inflammatory Purposes, is both a natural Right, and a civil Privilege---May we not be allowed to remark, that, this Objection is started with a very ill Grace by those, with whom it usually originates. For, Who, we beg Leave to ask, are the vile Profaners of this sacred Institution ? And who are the Encouragers of this Profanation ? And, *who*, are they that insult the Religion, the Laws, the Liberties of their Country, with this sad *Abuse* of so sacred an Ordinance ?---If *occasional* Conformity is to be justified---much more so *perpetual* Conformity. If the *Conscience* of an intelligent Being can be *deliberate* in the *first Instance*---for the sake of *Charity*, and our *common Nature*, we will presume it cannot be offended with the *constant Repetition*.

What

What then ! and shall *Religion* be traduced for the Infamy of those, who pervert it's holy Rites ?--- Shall the *Laws* be condemned, for the Depravity of those, who transgress them ?--- Shall the *Legislature* be despised, for the Want of Integrity and Character in those, who aspire to it's Offices and Honours ?--- Is the Purity of the Son of God to be impeached, because *Judas* was so daring, as to receive the Memorials of his redeeming Love ? or, the glorious Company of the *Apostles* to be reflected on, because they had a *Traitor* in their College ?--- And yet, such is the declamatory Effusion, which has been repeatedly poured out in the great Senate of our Nation ; and has frequently been regarded with the Patience and Attention, that TRUTH and PATRIOTISM alone deserve.

Upon the whole. It appears, from historical Matter of Fact, that, there is no one Act of the Legislature, in all the Statute Law, to which we are so much indebted, as to the TEST ACT, for the Security and Preservation of our *national* Religion---our *national* Liberties---our *national* Constitution, both in CHURCH and STATE. This Consideration alone should have great Weight with every sincere Protestant---and should withhold him from exerting every Nerve to throw down a Fence, which has been of essential Service to his Country, in Times of the most extreme Necessity. And, we are persuaded, upon
all

all the various Principles of Liberality of Sentiment---general Tranquillity---the public Good---and true Religion and Virtue---that, ~~the~~ the *Repeal* of this Act, instituted as it certainly has been by the *Wisdom* of our Legislature, is not *necessary*---is not *expedient*---is not *useful*. On the contrary, it is justly apprehended to be a very improper---a very alarming---a very dangerous Attack upon that noble Fabrick of our *Constitution*, and upon that great Column of internal *Peace*, which has been the sublime Object of our Wonder, the Theme of our Celebration, and the Source of our Felicity, for more than a Century.

We have only to subjoin our earnest Supplication and Hope, that the Angelic Chorus, which ushered in the Nativity of the Son of God, the great Author of our Religion, and the Prince of Peace, may be the Spirit and the Language of every Subject of these Realms---and that, in the steadfast Belief of divine Revelation, the Law, the Testimony, and the Word of Light---in a firm and united Attachment to our excellent Constitution, civil and Ecclesiastical---and in brotherly Affection one towards another, we may be able to say,

“ GLORY to GOD in the highest : and on Earth, PEACE ;
GOOD-WILL towards Men.”

BARTLET'S BUILDINGS, LONDON.

MONDAY, Feb. 1, 1790.

AT a very numerous General Meeting of the SOCIETY for PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE.

Whereas in the printed Resolutions of sundry Meetings of Protestant Dissenters, in different parts of the kingdom, it hath been insinuated that many of the Clergy, as well as other Members of the Established Church, concur with the Dissenters in wishing for a repeal of the CORPORATION and the TEST ACTS; and whereas the said Meetings of Protestant Dissenters invite such Members of the Established Church as may concur with them in their sentiments of the Test, to co-operate with them in their efforts for it's Abolition:

It is therefore unanimously resolved,

I. That it is the sense of this Society, that the repeated Attempts of the Dissenters to obtain a Repeal of the Corporation and the Test Acts, must give great uneasiness to all true friends of the Established Church: and that the most distant probability of it's success would be a cause for the greatest apprehension and alarm; the Test being a wise and necessary provision of the laws, for the common security of the Civil and Ecclesiastical Constitution, the interests of which, in this realm, are inseparably connected.

II. That it is the earnest wish of this Society, in which they are confident they have the concurrence of all conscientious Churchmen, that the blessings of a full toleration should be extended to Christians of all denominations; which blessings they conceive the Protestant Dissenters in England do actually enjoy.

III. That Religious Toleration would not be enlarged by the abrogation of the Corporation and the Test Acts, although the influence of Dissenters, in the concerns both of Church and State, would be increased in a degree inconsistent with the security of either.

IV. That this Society returns it's warmest Thanks to those upright Members of the House of Commons, who, however divided in their general politicks, have twice successfully united their virtuous efforts to resist the attempted innovation in the constitution of the united kingdoms. The Society is confident that by similar exertions, the renewed attempt will be again defeated; and it's Members declare that they will be ready upon all occasions, as far as their ability may extend, to shew a grateful sense of those publick services; and they invite and conjure their Brethren, in all parts of the kingdom, as they value the blessings, civil and religious, of the British Constitution, and would transmit them entire to their posterity, to co-operate with the Members of this Society, with firmness and vigour, in the common cause.

V. That the above Resolutions be printed in the publick newspapers.

Signed, by Order of the Board,

GEORGE GASKIN, Sec.

A P P E N D I X.

No. I.

R E A S O N S,

ASSIGNED BY A PIOUS DISSENTING MINISTER,

FOR NOT EXERTING HIMSELF IN

THE REPEAL OF THE TEST ACT.

I.

I TAKE it for granted that the *first set* of Lay-Nonconformists, (for I think our Clergy are not immediately concerned in these acts,) dissented from the Established Church, and separated, or rather withheld themselves from her communion, from motives purely religious, *viz.* for the sake of purer worship, a more spiritual discipline, a better teaching; that is, more advantageously to promote, and more effectually to secure, the salvation of their Souls: I hope this is the case with all Dissenters at the present day: these are the motives of my own Dissent, nor could I justify my conduct therein, on any other grounds. But our liberties, so far as they conduce, or any way relate to our spi-

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ritual

ritual Prosperity, and eternal Happiness, through the mercy of God and the clemency of our governors, are not only untouched, but well secured to us. Therefore with regard to the principal, and main grounds of our dissent, with regard to our best and most important Interests, we are no more concerned in the *Repeal*, than the rest of the nation. Let us therefore thankfully accept, and diligently improve the liberties and privileges we enjoy. Let us evidence the Conscientiousness of our Dissent, by our peaceable *Contentment* in lower stations, *with such things as we have*, nor envy churchmen their superior dignities. Let us neither thirst after, nor emulate, worldly pomp: but, *seek that Honour which cometh from God only*.

II.

These vehement strugglings for the Repeal, do, in my opinion, infer a greater odium on the *Dissenters*, than the *Acts* themselves, which they would have repealed.—Nobody doubts the sincere and firm attachment of the body of Dissenters, of all denominations, to the present Royal Family, or his Majesty's confidence in them; or that their abilities to serve him, whether natural or acquired, are equal to those of their neighbours. To how much then does the supposed *Odium*, arising from these Acts, in reality amount? But this their conduct impeaches them of aspiring, ambitious, avaricious desires. You think to quit yourselves of such a charge, by pleading your abhorrence of the fore-mentioned Profanation, &c.—A laudable zeal for a further Reformation; but let me tell you, how much and how often you may alledge these to be your genuine motives, and how just soever these Allegations, the World will judge that they will be other Views, which excite all this noise and bustle. And I hope you will agree with me, that a charge of ambition or avarice, too much countenanced by their

their own conduct, should seem more odious, to persons whose Profession requires a distinguished mortification to worldly grandeur, than any ill-grounded conclusions, drawn from oppressive Acts of Parliament.

III.

Could you obtain your desire, I am afraid the *Repeal* of these Acts would not fully answer such valuable ends, as the sanguine hopes of many are ready to suggest. Those who are most forward in this matter, seem to be mighty zealous for the dissenters, considered as a Party. For my part, I am no friend to party Zeal, nor do I think that it has ever done us any service. The Dissenters, considered as a Party, are no more to me than other Parties. Could I apprehend, that the so much desired Repeal would have an evident tendency to promote real vital Godliness, or even a general Reformation of Manners, I confess, I should more ardently desire it. The former is not so much as presumed; but many indeed profess a great Concern, and are ready from hence to hope for a more zealous Suppression of Immoralities, and a more impartial distribution of Justice. These are very laudable Ends, and much wanted. But I am afraid, could dissenters get into places of Power and Trust, their Heads, like other Men, would be apt to grow giddy; at least, if they retained their integrity, they would be very apt to relax their seeming Zeal; worldly honour is a dangerous snare, especially to persons bred in low life; and I am afraid as to the most, would neither contribute to the purity of their hearts, or lives; nay, it were well if it would not render them less pious, and less virtuous. And *as a city set on a hill cannot be hid*, so their actions, being rendered more public, would be more narrowly examined; and every mistake they made, magni-

fied into a crime, by means whereof many might be offended, and the greater reproach brought upon the Christian Profession.

Such, I believe, are the pacific and pious Sentiments of the most valuable part of the dissenting Community.

No. 2.

OCCASIONAL REMARKS.

IF, from the lamentable Experience of some national Occurrences in the last Age, which we are unwilling to circumstantiate, the *Legislature* hath thought fit to adopt such Measures, as appear to It best calculated to prevent the *Repetition* of so complicated an Evil in future—if, while it means to defend it's own Rights, the Rights of no Individual are invaded—shall it be deemed *Persecution*? If there be any Persecution here, it is not the State which *persecutes*, but which is *persecuted*.

It shall not be contested, but that it may arise from the Weakness of our Intellect, when we remark, that, A Confederacy in the Interior of a Body politic, uniting for the very Purpose of electing such Representatives in the Senate, as shall bind themselves to attempt an Innovation

A P P E N D I X.

vation in our present happy Constitution, is an Idea most seriously alarming in this licentious and abandoned Age; and which can redound but little to the Honour of Those, who may *commit* themselves in so *patriotic* a Cause!! It is well for us, there is a certain Balance in the State, [of whose Expedience and Necessity the most intrepid Assertor of civil and religious Liberty recorded in the Annals of this Country was at least convinced] which we may presume will operate as an effectual Barrier to the Success of such a *Conspiracy*.

We are also of Opinion, that it would require an Ingenuity, or rather, a degree of *Subtilty*, to which few, we hope, are equal, to produce any instance of Profaneness, as to Religion, or any Treachery, as to Allegiance, more disgraceful to every honest, every generous, every noble Principle, than the Prostitution of a sacred Ceremony, for the purpose of obtaining an Office, with an avowed Design to apply our Influence to the Injury of the State.

If a certain Magistrate of the City, as is reported, peremptorily refused to be bound to promote a Repeal of the Test Act, the Manliness of the declaration did him honour. What, are men valuing themselves upon their freedom, to *shackle* the minds of their *Representatives* at the very Onset of their Parliamentary career? It is a meanness that a *free Citizen* should revolt at.

No. 3.

THE extreme Caution and Delicacy, which the Legislature has observed in the Institution of the *Test Act*, is worthy to be noticed and admired. It directs all Officers, civil and military, to receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, according to the Usage of the Church of England, *within six months*, after their Admission.

Surely this is *Time enough* for Men of Sense, Education, and Consideration: and such only ought to be admitted to the higher and more responsible Offices in the State. And, as to inferior Officers, if They are ignorant of the grand Concerns of Religion in general, or of the Nature and Design of the sacramental Ordinance in particular, it is their *Fault*, and their *Shame*—where the Means of Instruction are so many, so all-sufficient.

To reflect therefore on the Church, or on the State, for any Prostitution or Abuse of this sort, is infinitely removed from the most distant Idea of good Sense, and ingenuous Candour.

It has not been unusual, indeed, in some Quarters, to demand a *Warrant* or Authority from the sacred Code for this Procedure.—In reply to which, it may be remarked, that, if the inspired Writings do not *enjoin* any thing of this sort, in a civil or religious Constitution, neither do they *forbid* it. Not but there is a Process recorded, which bears a very striking Resemblance, or Analogy, to That for which we

now

now contend, in the Example and Conduct of Jephthah. See Judges
xii.

Does it not appear, from the history of the present Times, and from the slavish Inconvenience to which *Many* of them are exposed, to be a DEFECT in the Legislation of the Country, that *the Members of the House of Commons* are exempted from this Test?

No. 4.

“ WHEN a country is attacked in any of it's rights by another country, or when attempts are made by ambitious foreign powers to injure it, a war in it's defence becomes necessary: and in such circumstances, to die for our country is meritorious and noble. These *defensive* wars are, in my opinion, the only just wars. *Offensive* wars are always unlawful; and to seek the aggrandizement of our country by them, that is, by attacking other countries, in order to extend dominion, or to gratify avarice, is wicked and detestable.”

Dr. PRICE.

“ AS most of the evils which have taken place in private life, and among individuals, have been occasioned by the desire of private interest overcoming public affections; so most of the evils which have taken place among bodies of men have been occasioned by the desire of *their own interest* overcoming the principle of universal benevolence: and

and leading them to attack one another's territories, to encroach on one another's rights, and to endeavour to build their own advancement on the degradation of all within the reach of their power; yet we must remember, that a *narrower interest* ought always to give way to a more *extensive interest*."

Dr. PRICE.

N. B. Would not the *zealous* Advocates for the Repeal of the Test Act do well to apply *the Spirit* of these Observations to Themselves?— It was well remarked, by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on this subject, That

"The religious opinions of any set of men were not to be restrained and limited, unless they should be found likely to prove the source of civil inconvenience to the state; nor ought the civil Magistrate, in any other point of view, to interfere with them. But there had always been admitted to be this solid distinction, that, though there is no natural right to interfere with religious opinions, yet when they are such as *may* produce a civil inconvenience, the Government has a right to guard against the *probability* of the evil inconvenience being produced; nor ought they to wait, till, by being carried into action, the inconvenience *has actually arisen*."

No. 5.

"TREMBLE, all ye Oppressors of the world! Take warning, all ye supporters of slavish governments, and slavish hierarchies! Call no more absurdly and wickedly REFORMATION, Innovation! You cannot

cannot now hold the world in darkness. Struggle no longer against increasing light and liberality. Restore to mankind their Rights; and consent to the correction of abuses, before *they*, and *you*, are *destroyed together*."

Dr. PRICE.

"The public Duties of Religion, it is melancholy to observe, are in common Neglect among us; and in a great Measure owing to the Defects [may I not say, the Absurdities?] in our established Codes of Faith and Worship. And if no Reformation of our established Formularies can be brought about, it must be expected that Religion will go on to lose its Credit"—&c. &c.

D^o.

"Bishops are recorded in all histories, as the most zealous, the most timorous, and of course the most vindictive of all men."

Dr. PRIESTLY.

"It has been said, that if the Dissenters gain this point, they will aim at something more. This I acknowledge. We should ask many things more, because there are many things more that we conceive ourselves to be entitled to, and which it will be no injury, but an advantage to our country to grant us. We are a part of the Community, which, in return for great merit, have received great injuries; part of them no doubt are removed, but it does not follow, that the remainder are no burden. We feel them to be so, and shall take every fair opportunity of endeavouring to relieve ourselves. Let the Bishops be fully apprized of this, and take their measures accordingly.

"We have the frankness and magnanimity of which they are destitute, and shall not endeavour to take them by surprize."

Dr. PRIESTLY.

May we dare to whisper in the ears of these philosophical and religious illuminators of the age, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of."—For whatever credit it may become us to give them, for their good intentions, as acting under the professional motives of Religion and Patriotism—if they have not *Youth* to plead for their extravagance, as Men of *Years* and *Experience*, they ought never to forget, that the *Instruments* they make use of, to accomplish their purposes, may be Characters, *without Religion, without Virtue, without Patriotism*—and that, Policy, without *These*, is equal to the destruction of the noblest Empire, that the Wisdom, the Integrity, or the Martyrdom of the best of men has ever yet erected!

In the Press, and speedily will be published,

by the same Author,

THE ESSENTIAL DEITY OF THE MESSIAH; and the Great Importance of that Article of the Christian Faith, to every conscientious Minister of the Church of *England*; considered, in a Sermon, preached in the Cathedral-Church of *St. Paul*, *January 24*, 1790, being the first *Sunday* in *Hilary Term*.

Just published, by the same Author,

RELIGION AND LOYALTY, the Grand Support of the *British* Empire: A Sermon, delivered in the Cathedral-Church of *St. Paul*, *January 30*, 1790, before the Right Hon. the Lord Mayor, the Court of Aldermen, &c. &c. being the Anniversary of the Martyrdom of King *Charles the First*.

